Writing an Excellent Personal Narrative

The word narrative simply means “story”. A “personal narrative” is simply a story about an event from a person’s life. Your personal narrative, however, will have a twist! It must be an event that was ironic. A plot twist is also acceptable! ☺

In order to write an effective personal narrative, you need to follow the format below.

Introductory Paragraph (1)

*The “Hook”*

Start your paper with a statement about your story that catches the reader’s attention, for example: a relevant quotation, question, fact, or definition.

*Set the Scene*

Provide the general information the reader will need to understand the story: Who are the major characters? When and where is it taking place?

Body Paragraphs (3)

*“Show (Describe), Don’t Tell”*

Good story telling includes details and descriptions that help the reader understand what the writer experienced. Think about using all five senses—not just the sense of sight—to add details about what you heard, saw, and felt during the event. For example, **“My heart jumped as the dark shape of the brown grizzly lurched toward me out of the woods”** provides more information about what the writer saw and felt than, “I saw a bear when I was hiking”.

*Passage of Time*

Writing about the events of your experience using time chronologically, from beginning to end, is the most common and clear way to tell a story. Whether you choose to write chronologically or not, use transition words to clearly indicate to the reader what happened first, next, and last. Some time transition words are next, finally, during, after, when, and later.

*Transitions*

In a personal narrative, a new paragraph marks a change in the action of a story, or a move from action to reflection. Paragraphs should connect to one another. For example, the end of one paragraph might be: “I turned and ran, hoping the bear hadn’t noticed me”, and the start of the next might be: “There are many strategies for surviving an encounter with a bear; ‘turn and run’ is not one of them.” The repetition of words connects the paragraphs.

Conclusion (1)

The conclusion of a narrative include the closing action of the event, but also should include some reflection or analysis of the significance of the event to the writer. What lesson did you learn? How has what happened to you affected your life now?

Outlining Your Narrative

Try applying this structure to your own writing: write sentences for the corresponding elements of your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion in the space provided below.

Introduction

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Begin your paper with a  “hook” that catches the  reader’s attention and set the  scene. Where is the event set?  What time of year? How old  were you when this happened? |  |
| What did you  learn , or how the event is  significant to you? |  |

Body paragraphs: write three significant moments from the beginning, middle, and end of the event. If you need more than 3 paragraphs, that’s perfectly fine! ☺

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| --- | --- |
| Para. 1:  Beginning  Action |  |
| Para. 2:  Middle  Action |  |
| Para 3:  End  Action |  |
| Irony/Plot Twist |  |

Conclusion

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Analyze and reflect on the  action of the story, including  how the events are significant  to you. |  |